

Recreational Fee Demonstration Program

Southeast Region



The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is one of four federal land management agencies included in the Recreational Fee Demonstration Program legislation passed as part of the Fiscal Year 1996 Appropriations Act. This program requires each agency to develop new or expanded fee collection sites in order to assess the feasibility of better offsetting the costs to administer recreation on public lands.



In the Southeast Region, Fee Demo (as it is commonly called) has provided an important source of revenue to enhance services for hunters, anglers, and others visiting national wildlife refuges. Surveys show continued public acceptance and satisfaction with the program.

Southeast Region Fee Demo Program Profile

- 80% of fees collected stay at the refuge where they were collected, while 20% is distributed to other refuges in the Southeast.
- 35 out of 135 national wildlife refuges in the Southeast collect fees.
- These 35 national wildlife refuges collected and spent \$1,006,039 in FY 2003 on recreation projects.
- Examples of fees assessed at these 35 refuges include: \$12.50 for a quota or general hunt, \$10 per person/day for a wilderness canoe trail, \$12 for an annual entrance fee, and \$2.00 for a boat ramp launch.
- Fee Demo revenues are used to fund activities associated with recreational programs, such as public hunting and fishing programs, ensuring visitor safety, and maintaining refuge roads and trails. The Fee Demo program also funds environmental education programs, brochures, trail and kiosk construction and maintenance, and improved signs. This funding allows the Service to offer better services to hunters, anglers, and other national wildlife refuge visitors.
- Since the Fee Demo program was initiated in 1996, visitation at Fee Demo sites nationwide has increased by 84% (8.4 million visitors). This suggests that the Fee Demo program has not had a negative impact on visitation.
- Public acceptance of the Service's Fee Demo program rates high. A recent visitor satisfaction survey showed that 94% of those surveyed believe the amount charged was "about right" or "too low." Visitors particularly like the provision for retaining the majority of revenues at the refuge where they were collected.



All photos are USFWS.



Congressional authorization of the Fee Demo program will expire December 31, 2005.

For more information about the Southeast Region's Fee Demonstration Program, contact Deborah Jerome, Program Coordinator, at 404/679 7170.